

**Human Rights and Equity Office  
Queen's University**

**Re-Imagining Academia Speaker Series Proposal  
Centering Voices, Challenging systems, Reshaping the academy**

**Venue: Zoom  
Registration: Eventbrite**

Date: November 19, 2025

Time: 12:00-1:30 PM

Speaker: Dr. Eddy Ng

Moderator: Dr. Yasmine Djerbal

**Abstract**

**From Inclusion to Belonging: Reimagining Diversity in Academic Spaces**

The period since society witnessed the horrific discoveries of Indigenous children's graves and the murder of George Floyd has been transformational in many areas, including the academy, but there is still untapped potential to diversify academia. Many white academics renewed their wokeness, born out of tragedy, and pledged to do better. Yet the academy continues to reproduce ideologies that reinforce white supremacy and subordinate racialized and equity-seeking groups. Though the academy fosters progressive views, it overlooks the performance, networks, and power structures of white academics in a profession that is held in high regard as a steward for racial justice and social change. Research shows the impact of biases on individuals, organizations, and societies, yet academics find it difficult to adopt the knowledge they inhabit and reproduce institutions filled with discrimination in their (un)conscious acts.

Moreover, recent years have witnessed a troubling retreat from DEI commitments in various academic settings, reflecting backlash, fatigue, or resistance to sustained systemic change. This retreat risks undermining early gains, allowing the persistence of exclusionary practices and slowing momentum for genuine transformation. In some cases, institutions have rolled back or deprioritized equity initiatives amid political and ideological pushback, highlighting the fragility of progress when not deeply embedded in institutional culture.

A systemic change is necessary to offer an environment in which equity-seeking groups can feel empowered to flourish. Research shows that, despite the best intentions to make the academy better and more just, we have failed to dismantle the systemic barriers to enable equity-seeking groups to perform freely and fully. Equity-seeking academics are overburdened with service, and their work is often undervalued, invisible, and even

discouraged. The traditional measure for academic success (e.g., tenure, promotion), while projecting a perception of fairness, is fraught with subjectivity.

We need to change the “rules of engagement” that govern gatekeepers and the academic ecosystem and normalize excellence from equity-seeking groups that we ordinarily do not expect excellence from, minimize racial stress, and disarm white fragility (or dominant group fear of being displaced). Institutions put in place equity measures, yet they fail to meaningfully advance women, racialized workers, Indigenous peoples, and persons with disabilities. Our work should empower a group of equity-deserving, high-potential individuals who faced many struggles to become successful academics.